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Service Quality and Public Satisfaction at Urban Transformation Centre (UTC) Kuala Lumpur (KL)

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Abstract

This study deals with the analysis of service quality and public satisfaction at UTC KL. This is a quantitative study where 341 questionnaires were distributed to the public directly when getting services at UTC KL. This study was conducted to examine the level of service quality provided to customers, to identify which part of the service provided was most influential to public satisfaction and to investigate whether the service quality provided by public organizations located at UTC KL can influence public satisfaction. Based on the research findings the level of service quality provided is moderate. This means they must strive to increase their service quality delivery. Besides that, the empathy dimension of service quality is the dimension that most influences public satisfaction compared to other dimensions. Lastly, the researcher found that empathy and responsiveness have a correlation to public satisfaction and the other three dimensions of service quality do not correlate with public satisfaction. The public organizations located at UTC KL should be more responsive to the public in order to increase the satisfaction of public toward government services. The government should understand public's needs in order to increase the level of service quality as well as public satisfaction.

Keywords: Public Organizations, Public Satisfaction, Service Quality, SERVQUAL, UTC KL

Introduction

The UTC is a Malaysian government attempt and strategy to provide the citizens that live in urban areas an integrated location for major agencies of government, public facilities including private sectors services. The implementation of UTCs is part of Malaysia National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) plan that has been introduced to enhance the service quality through cooperation between government agencies and the private sectors. The Ministry of Finance Malaysian (MOF) through National Strategy Unit (NSU) is responsible for creating and supervising all the UTCs in the country. The UTC integrates Malaysian public sectors in one building to ease the public to get in touch and access to all departments in one place established by Malaysian Prime Minister Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak on 23rd June 2012 for the first UTC in Melaka and followed

by UTC KL on September 2012. UTC is a complement to Pusat Transformasi Komuniti (CTP) to ensure all initiatives services and programs of government are provided at the maximum to the public (www.utc.my). The establishment of UTCs as well as mini-UTCs as 1-stop centres is the key to the government to provide a wide range of their services to Malaysians. There are approximately up to 40 agencies including private sectors, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) in UTC KL that operate together under one roof with operation hours from 8.00 am to 10.00 pm from Monday to Sunday.

In a country where the government agencies are large organizations, there are many complaints about Malaysian government agencies due to the low quality of service delivery to public and dissatisfaction of public towards government agencies service delivery. From year 2013 until 2018, the Malaysian Public Complaint Management System has shown that (Figure 1) the number of complaints reduced from the year 2013 until 2015, it can be seen that the Malaysian government strives to increase its quality of service delivery. However, the number of complaints increased marginally in 2016. The complaints show that the Malaysian government agencies still face the same issue which is failure to deliver its services with high quality based on public's expectation.

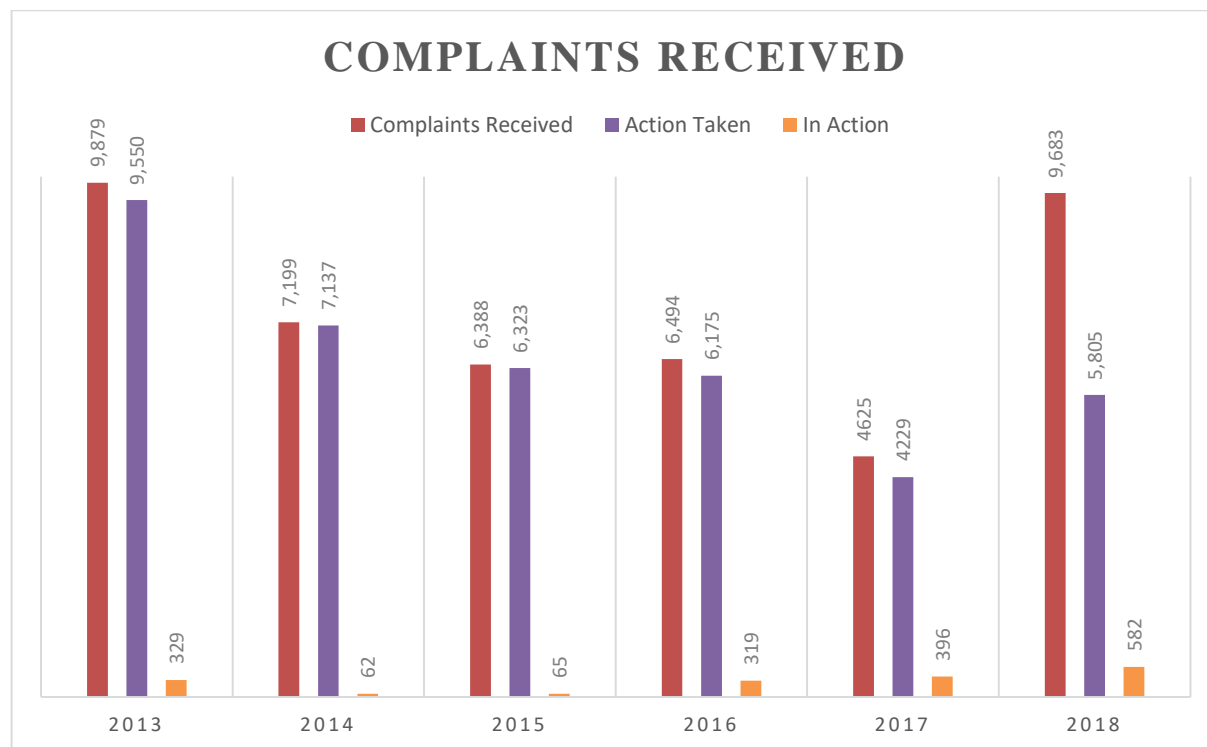


Figure 1. Overall Statistics of Complaints by Years 2013 to 2018

Source: Sistem Pengurusan Aduan Awam (SISPAA)

There are nine categories of complaints made by the public, as reported by Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) based on their latest statistics from 1st January 2018 until 31st December 2018 as in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Complaints Category on Malaysian Government Agencies for Year 2018

Source: Sistem Pengurusan Aduan Awam (SISPAA)

| No. | Category of Complaints | Complaints Received |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | Unsatisfactory Quality of Service | 723 |
| 2. | Failure of Enforcement | 457 |
| 3. | Failure to Adhere to Set Procedures | 798 |
| 4. | Actions taken do not meet the complainants need | 639 |
| 5. | Unfair Action | 444 |
| 6. | Lack of Public Amenities | 211 |
| 7. | Misconduct of Civil Servant | 201 |
| 8. | Abuse of Power / Misappropriation | 237 |
| 9. | Inadequacies of Policy Implementation and Law | 111 |
| | Total | 3,911 |

The main issue is of service delivery failure among public organizations in Malaysia. Therefore, it shows the Malaysian government agencies need to improve on its service quality. There is a problem whether service delivery by government agencies meet the public expectations that influence the level of their satisfaction. According to Anands (2014), it becomes essential to the organisation since the satisfaction of customers is the key indicator for future behaviour intention. In view of the possible effect of service quality aspects and customer satisfaction has on organisational development, there is a significant requirement to determine the current level of UTC KL service quality and customer satisfaction. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between 5-dimensions of service quality and customer satisfaction at the UTC KL. Lastly, the researcher also found that there is one obvious research gap which is there is no previous research about service quality and public satisfaction that have been conducted before at UTC KL. The researcher believes this study is the first to be conducted as there is no previous literature found. Therefore, this gap can act as problem statement in this study and as potential cause to enable the researcher to conduct the research at UTC KL. To ensure that this research is at the right path and to accomplish research goals, the research objectives established are:

- i. To evaluate the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL.
- ii. To identify which dimensions of service quality that most influences public satisfaction.
- iii. To examine whether there is an association between the dimensions of service quality and public satisfaction.

There are three research questions as indicators to the researcher in conducting a research on service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL as stated below:

- i. What is the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL?
- ii. Which dimensions of service quality that most influences public satisfaction?
- iii. Is there any association between the dimensions of service quality and public satisfaction?

Literature Review

Service

According to Liu (2008), the term service comes from the Latin word *Servitum*, it means to serve by slaves and he also states from English definition, service is referred to when someone is providing the services to receivers. Its ownership cannot be claimed back because service is known as an intangible benefit.

Quality

Quality has different meaning to different people following their various perspectives. However, the famous meaning of quality is by Juran and Godfrey (1998) who give quality concept in two important areas. First, *"quality means those features of products which meet customer needs and thereby provide customer satisfaction"*. It means that it is to ensure the quality that is served bring satisfaction to the customer. That can increase the profit when customer is satisfied, and hence they will come again for repeat order. In this concept to get high quality, high cost is needed as well. Second, *"quality means freedom from deficiencies—freedom from errors that require doing work over again (rework) or that result in field failures, customer dissatisfaction, customer claims, and so on"*. It means to achieve quality, error must be avoided in every task. Attempt must be made to decrease error in work or tasks and to decrease the cost as well.

Service Quality

According to Zeithaml and Bitner (2003), service quality is concerned about the reflection of customer's perception on specific service dimensions which are reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, tangibles, satisfaction and quality of service that can be influenced by perceptions of quality of service, quality of product, and price as well as factors of personal and situational. According to Mwakaje (2015), the theory of service quality is concerned with the estimation of customer judgment towards degree of quality. It means that if performance is not met with customer expectation, the degree of quality is low and when performance exceeds customer expectation which means the quality at high level, this emphasise that service quality will be judged from the customer expectations. Hence, when quality of service is increasing, the satisfaction of customer and customer's intention to reuse the service again is also increasing. As the concept of service quality is an important key term for this study, below it is briefly defined in terms of its five dimensions (Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy).

Tangibles

Tangibility can be referred to as an action that provides necessary or relevant resources such as pamphlets, brochures, statements and others that associate with service delivery to the customer

with high visibility and accessibility to them. It includes employees neat appearance that will lead to customer satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985).

Reliability

Reliability refer to solving the customer's problems properly, perform the service right at first time, deliver the service as promised and insist on error-free record (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988).

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to employee's alacrity and preparedness in providing what customer needs conveniently at any time (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Assurance

Assurance can be defined as the employee's capability to perform their job well based on their expertise that leads to the inspiration of trust and confidence level to the customer (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Empathy

According to Joshua (2015), empathy is the capability to provide individual attention to customers through service delivery (cited by Iwaarden et al., 2003) with convenient opening hours, provide individual attention, "put oneself in someone else's shoes" that lead to better understanding of what customer really wants as well as capability to increase communication relationship with customer when serving them (cited by Ananth et al., 2011).

Public (Customer)

According to Wisniewski (1996), there is no issue in defining the customer concept in terms of the private organisation. Its definition is more precise and clear compared to public organisation. To define the customer concept is quite difficult and ambiguous. Sometimes, the term itself is not suitable to be used in public organisation. The author has tried to give a definition of the customer based on public organisation perspective which might be an individual, interest group, one or more elected representative, a government department or agency or society as a whole.

Satisfaction

According to Liu (2008), satisfaction is a reflection of human psychology. Satisfaction of customer can influence their behaviour of post purchasing like praising, complaining, rising or reducing of customer loyalty, attitude and switching of the brand. He also states the definition from a dictionary of Merriam-Webster, satisfaction can be referred to necessities or desire fulfilment as well as assurance of convincing of certainty. Satisfaction involves the relationship between customer's expectation and the customer's actual experiences.

Public (Customer) Satisfaction

According to Mwakaje (2015), customer satisfaction is the minimum acceptable service level that provides the satisfaction of customers as critical key areas (cited by Murphy, 2000). Customer satisfaction also can be understood as perceived value. According to Choi (2001), value refers to *“what I get for what I give”* which means when the *“get”* is a match or exceeds the *“give”* the satisfaction of customer will rise.

Relationship between Service Quality and Public (Customer) Satisfaction

According to Elmayer (2011), many researchers found that SERVQUAL has the highest relationship with customer satisfaction. For example, a study by Yaras, Bilgin and Shemwell in 1997 reveals that the satisfaction can be influenced by service quality dimensions (SERVQUAL). In addition, Augustyn and Ho (1998) found that the service quality dimensions (SERVQUAL) is a vital instrument to examine the consumer satisfaction definition. Besides that, the previous study by Alsayyed (1998), Wong, Rexha and Phau (2008) as well as Kenneth (1993) indicates SERVQUAL has strong validity and stability to resolve service quality problem.

Theory of Service Quality Model

In this study the researcher will focus on one model of service quality which is SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al., (1985). It has five service quality dimensions used to analyse the relationship of management based on their behavioural intentions (cited by Chen, 2011; Shahin & Samea, 2010; Verhoef & Lemon, 2012). At a later study, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) developed a 22-item instrument, recognized as SERVQUAL, which is now widely used as a generic instrument for measuring service quality (Ladhari, 2008). The instrument items represent the 5 dimensions that are tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, and empathy.

Theory of Public (Customer) Satisfaction Model

According to Agbor (2011), customer satisfaction may be very difficult to measure because it involves human feelings. Agbor (2011) also suggested the best way to know customer's feeling is through asking them directly as an informal method to measure the level of customer satisfaction (cited by Levy, 2009). He also suggests three ways to measure customer satisfaction which is through distribution of questionnaire to customer, the result of customer's feedback will generate quantitative data. The second way is to organize focus group or informal discussion conducted by a trained moderator. Discussions are orchestrated by the moderator and it can tell us what customers think. The third way is an informal measure like reading blocs which means we are talking to customer directly.

Conceptual Framework

Based on literature review and adaptation of framework model of service quality and public (customer) satisfaction, the researcher has managed to establish a conceptual framework as below:

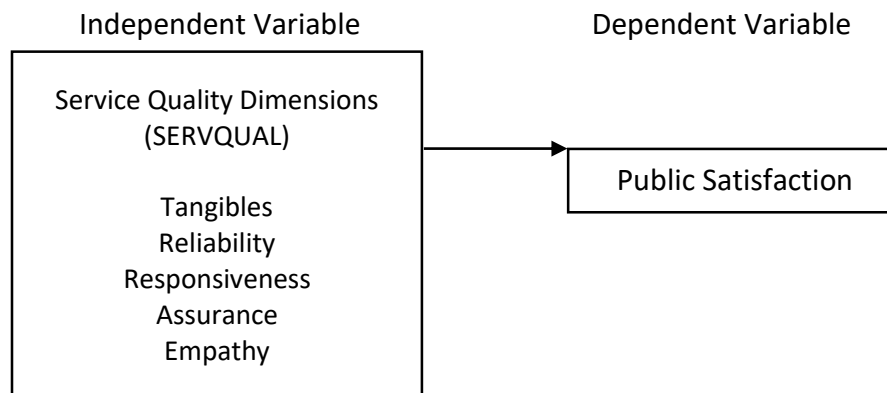


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from SERVQUAL, developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988)

The figure above shows the relationship between five dimensions of service quality that influence public satisfaction towards Malaysian public organizations located at UTC KL. Based on the literature review the researcher comes out with this conceptual framework to enable her to examine the level of service quality provided by UTC KL and to measure which dimension of service quality that influences the most on public satisfaction as well as to analyse the relationship between independent variable and dependent variable.

Methodology

This study used cross-sectional research design. The researcher used a questionnaire to examine the factors. Data collection was through the distribution of questionnaires to the public at UTC KL. The respondents were conveniently selected within UTC KL. A quantitative method was used for testing and validity of the study. The populations of respondents were the public that got the services at UTC KL. The visitors statistic conducted by management of UTC KL average 3,000 to 5,000 visitors daily to make transaction at one of the 39 Malaysia government agencies (Bernama, 2013). The researcher has chosen the lowest population which is 3,000 with sample size 341 respondents required for this study. The researcher used sampling technique that represents the result of the whole population. To define the way to make a group of sampling from the population, the researcher used the convenient sampling method. The Likert-type scale determines the experience of the public in acceptance of service and what they feel about it. It shows how strongly agree or disagree the public is with each question presented on a 5-point scale. The researcher has chosen three data analysis (by using statistical technique - SPSS Version 2.0) as shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Statistical Technique in Data Analysis

| Statistical Technique | Research Questions |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Descriptive Statistics | What is the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL? |
| Multiple Regression | Which dimensions of service quality that most influences public satisfaction? |
| Bivariate Pearson Correlation | Is there any association between the dimensions of service quality and public satisfaction? |

Finding

Through profile of respondents, it has been indicated that the respondent basic traits and characteristics, they have responded to answering properly the questionnaires given to them. All questionnaires were well distributed. The result of the respondents profile is in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Respondent's General Information

| Items Description | Profile of Respondent | No. | % |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----|------|
| Gender | Male | 180 | 52.8 |
| | Female | 161 | 47.2 |
| Age | Below 20 years | 50 | 14.7 |
| | 21-30 years | 181 | 53.1 |
| | 31-40 years | 55 | 16.1 |
| | 41-50 years | 38 | 11.1 |
| | 51 and above | 17 | 05.0 |
| Race | Malay | 206 | 60.4 |
| | Chinese | 93 | 27.3 |
| | Indian | 28 | 8.2 |
| | Others | 14 | 4.1 |
| Highest level of education | Certificate | 106 | 31.1 |
| | (SRP/UPSR/PMR/SPM/STPM/SKM) | 207 | 60.7 |
| | Undergraduate (Diploma/Degree) | 13 | 3.80 |
| | Postgraduate (Master/PhD) | 15 | 4.40 |
| | Professional Qualification | | |
| Marital status | Single | 220 | 64.5 |
| | Married | 108 | 31.7 |
| | Divorce | 13 | 3.80 |
| Do you know the existence of the UTC? | Yes | 325 | 95.3 |
| | No | 16 | 4.70 |
| How often do you visit UTC? | Not Very Often | 57 | 16.7 |
| | Not Often | 102 | 29.9 |
| | Sometime | 139 | 40.8 |
| | Often | 28 | 8.20 |
| | Very Often | 15 | 4.40 |

Based on Table 3, the number of male respondents that participated in this research is greater than female respondents, 180 male respondents 161 female respondents. Most of the respondents are between 21 to 30 years old and the Malay race is more involved in this research compared to other races. The Malay community is the largest in Malaysia and for the research, they numbered at 206 people.

The Level of Service Quality among Public Organizations Located at UTC KL

Referring to Table 4 below, the researcher has used the Likert scale in all items of independent variables of service quality in the descriptive statistic. The outcomes of overall mean value for service quality was 3.5782 which scale categorized as moderate or average level because the values were in range 3 between scales of 1 and 5.

Table 4. Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Service Quality

| Independent Variable: Service Quality | Mean | Std Deviation | Scale |
|--|--------|---------------|---|
| Tangibles | 3.4240 | 0.66802 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |
| Reliability | 3.5982 | 0.69730 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |
| Responsiveness | 3.5699 | 0.72755 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |
| Assurance | 3.7466 | 0.71576 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |
| Empathy | 3.6158 | 0.68297 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |
| Service Quality (Overall) | 3.5782 | 0.59526 | 1=Strongly Disagree 3=Moderate 5=Strongly Agree |

Dimension of Service Quality that Most Influences Public Satisfaction

Referring to Table 5 below, it concerns on coefficients of service quality and public satisfaction that define the beta b value. Through this beta b value, it is able to specify relative influence and the researcher can examine which independent variable that influences the most on the dependent variable. The finding found that empathy in service quality had the largest influence on public

satisfaction ($b=0.264$, $t=4.277$, $p<0.01$) and followed by responsiveness in service quality had less influence on public satisfaction ($b=0.237$, $t=3.504$, $p<0.01$). According to Emy Noor (2016), the range for beta value should be in between 0 to 1 (cited by Field, 2014). Meanwhile, the beta value for reliability was 0.133, $t=1.960$ and p value more than 0.01. Beta b value for tangible was 0.093, $t=1.780$ and p value more than 0.01 and the beta value for assurance was 0.097, $t=1.434$ and p value more than 0.01. Hence, this finding clearly explained that only empathy in service quality had influenced the most in public satisfaction.

Table 5. Coefficients of Service Quality and Public Satisfaction

| Independent Variables | Standardized Coefficient (Beta) | t | Sig. |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Tangibles | 0.093 | 1.780 | 0.076 |
| Reliability | 0.133 | 1.960 | 0.051 |
| Responsiveness | 0.237 | 3.504 | 0.001 |
| Assurance | 0.097 | 1.434 | 0.152 |
| Empathy | 0.264 | 4.277 | 0.000 |
| *Significance at $p<0.05$ | | | |

An Association between the Service Quality and Public Satisfaction

This section aims to examine whether there is a relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. Independent variables were known as service quality which comprised of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy. The dependent variable was public satisfaction.

Table 6. Coefficients of Service Quality and Public Satisfaction

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|--|----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 0.819 | 0.157 | | 5.219 | 0.000 |
| | Tangibles | 0.093 | 0.052 | 0.093 | 1.780 | 0.076 |
| | Reliability | 0.127 | 0.065 | 0.133 | 1.960 | 0.051 |
| | Responsiveness | 0.218 | 0.062 | 0.237 | 3.504 | 0.001 |
| | Assurance | 0.091 | 0.063 | 0.097 | 1.434 | 0.152 |
| | Empathy | 0.259 | 0.060 | 0.264 | 4.277 | 0.000 |
| a. Dependent Variable: Public Satisfaction | | | | | | |

From Table 6, it shows in detail about the coefficients of service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) as independent variables towards public satisfaction as dependent variable. In order to have an association between the independent variables and the dependent variable, the significant (Sig.) p value should be less than 0.01 ($p<0.01$). Based on this

finding, it showed that there was no positive significant association between tangibles and public satisfaction which p value was 0.076 which was more than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). Meaning that tangibles factor did not contribute to the public satisfaction. Besides, reliability in service quality showed no positive significant association with public satisfaction which p value was 0.051 which was more than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). It showed that reliability was also not contributed to the public satisfaction and the same was for assurance as there was no positive significant association with public satisfaction which p value was 0.152 which was more than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$).

However, there was a positive significant association between responsiveness and public satisfaction which p value was 0.001 which was less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). Thus, the researcher summarised that responsiveness was one of the important factors in service quality which contributed to the public satisfaction. Lastly, referring to the last independent variable was empathy and public satisfaction. There was a positive significant association between empathy and public satisfaction which p value was 0.000 which was less than 0.01 ($p < 0.01$). Therefore, empathy also contributed to the public satisfaction in service quality.

Discussion

Based on the Research Objective 1, the target is to evaluate the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL and through descriptive statistics analysis the finding found that the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL is at a moderate level. Besides that, researcher also found that the lowest mean values between five dimensions of service quality were tangibles and responsiveness. Based on the Research Objective 2, the target is to identify which dimension of service quality most influences on public satisfaction. Through multiple regression analysis the finding found that, empathy in service quality had the biggest influence on public satisfaction. This finding had clearly explained that only empathy dimension in service quality had influenced the most in public satisfaction compare to other variables. According to Parasuraman et al., (1988), understanding customer expectations better than competitors in providing the required customer service at any time without any inconvenience will strongly influence the level of customer satisfaction. According to Joshua (2015), convenient working hours, individualized attention, a better understanding of customer's specific needs, enhanced communication between management and customers will have a positive outcome on customer satisfaction (cited by Ananth et al., 2011). Based on the Research Objective 3, the target is to examine whether there is an association between the dimensions in service quality and public satisfaction. Through bivariate pearson correlation analysis, the finding found that only two dimensions in service quality have positive significant association with public satisfaction which was responsiveness and empathy. Meanwhile, another three dimensions in the service quality process were of no positive significant association with public satisfaction. However, a study by Mukhtar et al. (2014) have revealed that there is positive correlation between service quality dimensions with customer satisfaction (cited by Anands, 2014). The result also states the most service quality dimensions that affect public satisfaction is tangible and assurance. Meanwhile, reliability, empathy, and responsiveness have less correlation with public satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusions, the dimensions of the service quality that has been highlighted in this study are found to be reasonable factors and essential to take care of in order to increase the level of service quality provided as well as to increase the level of public satisfaction. Based on the results of the findings the level of service quality among public organizations located at UTC KL is at a moderate level. Although the government has already enhanced its alternative or strategy to reduce poor quality in service delivery to the public, it still needs to improve time to time and they need to tackle which part of its service need to be upgraded in order to fulfil public's need. At the same time, they can modernize the system of management or administration further in public organizations located at UTC KL. Furthermore, the researcher has also found the dimension of service quality that highly influences public satisfaction on public organizations located at UTC KL is empathy. Therefore, empathy is the most crucial part to be given attention particularly for public organizations located at UTC KL. They must have the ability to take care of the public's interest. According to Joshua (2015), an organisation or individual must have the ability to watch carefully and give more attention individually on the customer that can lead to the development of services delivery. Besides that, based on the third finding, there is high correlation between service quality (empathy and responsiveness dimensions) and public satisfaction at UTC KL. This indicated that only both dimensions have a strong relationship with public satisfaction and both dimensions can increase the level of public satisfaction towards UTC KL. The researcher hopes that through this research, it contributes knowledge to the readers on the importance of an organisation that gives more attention that can provide high service quality. In suggestions for future research the researcher proposes to do research in other UTC branch and make a comparison with UTC KL for better evaluation towards service quality provided by the public sector. The sample size for this study was small because it only involved public organizations located at UTC KL only. As we know there are many UTC's including Mini UTC's across Malaysia. This research only applies to UTC KL as other public organizations located at other UTC's might have high level of service quality compare to UTC KL. The researchers suggest that each public organisation located at UTC KL should be investigated individually in order to precisely identify the level of public satisfaction towards service delivery from each organisation. Lastly, the researcher found that the empathy in service quality is the most influential dimension that influences the level of public satisfaction towards service quality provided. For future research it would be better to find out why empathy is the most influential dimension on the level of public satisfaction compared to other dimensions (tangible, reliability, responsiveness and assurance).

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